

**Manichaeian World of Colonialism:
An Analysis of Samuel Selvon's
*The Lonely Londoners***

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Abstract:

This paper examines the struggle against colonialism, a system whose dualism-based logic rests on the belief that racial and species-based identification are the sole determinants of social status. The researcher attempts to analyze Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) in which the two-sided concepts, "self" and "other" underpin some varieties of colonial authority. The novel examines the West Indian community that settled in Britain in the 1950s. After being encouraged by colonizers for decades that now was a great time to return to the Motherland, a group of these people did just that. After a long journey, they arrived in Britain, their minds full of hope for a better life in London after escaping colonial oppression. However, the migrants come to regret the sacrifice of their dignity and individuality in their attempt to assimilate into English society. Migrants to Britain often feel conflicted after arriving in a society that is so harsh and cold. Colonialism is based on and actively promotes a violent hierarchy, which can be summarized by the dichotomies of "center" and "periphery," "colonizer" and "colonized," "metropolis" and "empire," and "civilized" and "primitive." Some contemporary writers and critics in the field of postcolonial studies have recast the Manichaeen paradigm of good and evil as colonizer and colonized. In this chosen work of fiction, the colonizer makes their superiority and demand for obedience abundantly clear. The postcolonial discourses investigate the central Manichaeen dichotomies of the binary frameworks of imperial ideology.

Keywords: Manicheism; postcolonialism; self ; other

المخلص

يناقش البحث النضال ضد الاستعمار ، وهو نظام يعتمد المنطق القائم على الثنائية وعلى الاعتقاد بأن التحديد العرقي والقائم على الأنواع هما المحددان الوحيدان للوضع الاجتماعي. يحاول الباحث تحليل رواية صموئيل سيلفون (1956) *The Lonely Londoners* حيث تدعم المفاهيم ذات الوجهين ، "الذات" و "الآخر" بعض أشكال السلطة الاستعمارية. تتناول الرواية المجتمع الهندي الغربي الذي استقر في بريطانيا في الخمسينيات من القرن الماضي. بعد أن شجعهم المستعمرون لعقود من الزمن بأن هذا الوقت المناسب للعودة إلى الوطن الأم ، فعلت مجموعة من هؤلاء الناس ذلك بالضبط. بعد رحلة طويلة ، وصلوا إلى بريطانيا ، وعقولهم مليئة بالأمل في حياة أفضل في لندن بعد هروبهم من القمع الاستعماري. ومع ذلك ، يندم المهاجرون على التضحية بكرامتهم وفردية في محاولتهم الاندماج في المجتمع الإنجليزي. غالبًا ما يشعر المهاجرون إلى بريطانيا بعد وصولهم إلى مجتمع قاسٍ وبارد. يقوم الاستعمار على أساس التسلسل الهرمي العنيف ويعززه بنشاط ، والذي يمكن تلخيصه من خلال الانقسامات بين "المركز" و "المحيط" و "المستعمر" و "المستعمر" و "العاصمة" و "الإمبراطورية" و "المتحضرة" و "البدائية". " أعاد بعض الكتاب والنقاد المعاصرين في مجال دراسات ما بعد الاستعمار صياغة النموذج المانوي للخير والشر باعتباره مستعمرًا ومستعمرًا. في هذا العمل الخيالي المختار ، يوضح المستعمر تفوقه وطلب الطاعة بوضوح تام. تبحث خطابات ما بعد الاستعمار في الانقسامات المانوية المركزية للأطر الثنائية للإيديولوجية الإمبراطورية.

Introduction

Frantz Fanon explains in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) why colonialism is bad and how it can be eradicated and replaced with something better. Fanon uses Manichean logic to explain the colonial world's strict categorization of people and cultures. He characterizes this "Manichean Logic" as a global order based on the principle of "mutual exclusion" (p. 4), in which "we" are pitted against "they." Fanon , further , asserts that the colonizers' world is ruled by "Manichaeism Logic," which classifies people on three different levels (mental, spiritual, and geographical). People in this colonized society ,who hold views different from the majority would be persecuted, shunned, and eventually eliminated. As a result of the colonizer's efforts, the colonized were confined to particular areas and thought patterns. The colonized, in order to set themselves free, must "[demolish] the colonists sector, burying it deep within the earth or banishing it" (Fanon, pp. 6)

Some modern postcolonial writers and critics have taken Manichaeism's emphasis on good and evil and applied it to the concepts of colonizer and colonized in their own work. By positing a dichotomous

opposition between good and evil, Zia Ahmed and Zoobia Abbas Khan (2014) maintains , Manichaeism serves to divide communities, cultures, and peoples into colonizers and colonized. The Manichean allegory, according to postcolonial discourse, always depicts the colonizer's pursuit of utmost wealth, power, and dominance over the colonized community.(p. 2) According to postcolonial theory, the Manichean allegory consistently represents the colonizer's drive for unchecked material success and political dominance over the colonized people. Colonialists' conception of absolute dominance over other nations is strengthened by the colonialists' many problems with native nations and by the various rationales they use to justify those problems. Because indigenous people are unable to run the country. The imperial powers seek to civilize the natives because they view the natives as being uneducated, overemotional, and incapable of making good use of their resources.

Frantz Fanon, who authors four books that dissect the horrors of colonial oppression through a Manichean psychological framework, condemns the colonial system's strict categorization of the "black" as inferior and "other," and he speaks out against its Manichean divides. Fanon argues that the polarization into good and evil, truth and lies, and white and black stems from a "Manichaeism delirium," which in turn leads to the colonizer/colonized dichotomy.(Kehinde, p. 110)

On the other hand, the idea of 'self and the other are represented as the colonizer and the colonized' (Al-saidi, p. 95) Ultimately, Fanon claims, a Manichean world emerges as a result of the colonial project. Since the colonial world is permeated by Manichaeist beliefs that credit all good qualities in society to the white race, the colonized despise having those qualities ascribed to them. Manichaeism," Fanon states, "goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal" (p.42)

Imperial Manichaeism views natives as evil and that they have a tainted mentality and a lack of rationality. Therefore, they establish themselves totally in the other's land by subjugating the colonized for the ostensible goal of educating them. However, the colonized see the colonizer with animosity because of the colonizer's attempts (mostly successful) to destroy their culture by plundering their resources and treating them like livestock. A collision between the cultures of colonizer and colonized can be observed. The colonial powers forced an educational system on the

indigenous that glorified the colonizers' enlightened past while simultaneously instilling a loathing for the natives' terrible history. This led to a paradoxical situation in which the natives felt both drawn to and opposed to the colonial powers. Fanon asserts:

The people who in the early days of the struggle had adopted the primitive [Manichaeism] of the colonizer — Black versus white, Arab versus infidel — realize en route that some blacks can be whiter than the whites, and that the prospect of a national flag or independence does not automatically result in certain segments of the population giving up their privileges and their interests . (p.143)

If the 'self' is the orderly, rational, masculine, good, then the 'Other' must be the chaotic, illogical, feminine, evil. This is how the concept of Otherness frames the world. The process of demonization involved in creating the Other reflects the "ambivalence at the very heart of authority." (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. 2002, P.3). The term "post-colonialism" is sometimes used to describe a social movement in which colonized peoples instead of colonizers speak for themselves. That's why post-colonial writing is, in a way, about creating a global center and periphery. Post-colonial theory, as argued by Homi Bhabha (1994), has focused on the ambiguities and tensions inherent in the colonizer/colonized dynamic.

Reys claims: "Manicheism ,introduced by the colonizer and built into the colonial situation as a whole becomes the basis for unifying the subjugated race against their foreign oppressor" (p.107)

On the other hand, Edward Said, explains in *Culture and Imperialism* that, "the movements and migration of people from their homelands is a central historical fact of colonization" (p. 402).

To describe the dichotomous character of imperial ideology, postcolonial scholars employ the term "Manicheism." In Fanon's view, colonized people turn to Manichaeism during the decolonization era.: "Thus we see that the primary Manichaeism which governed colonial society is preserved intact during the period of decolonization; that is to say that the settler never ceases to be the enemy, the opponent, the foe that must be overthrown" (p.50).

Postcolonial studies take a two-pronged approach to literature, first analyzing texts written by the colonized (termed the colonized body) and

then analyzing texts written by the colonizers (termed the "colonizer mind," which promotes the colonizer's culture as superior to the culture of the colonized Other). Edward Said(1994) says in his book *Culture and Imperialism*: “no one today is purely one thing...”(p.407) Furthermore, Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin(2007) noted that: “colonized subject is characterized as ‘other’ through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view.”(p.154-5)

Postcolonial novelists and writers have consistently endeavored to explore ideas of identity and difference in their work. The argument between colonizers and colonized, civilized and uncivilized, good and evil, white and black, and so on is unique to studies of colonial literature. There is a growing trend in western philosophy that divides the world into stark categories of good and evil.

Samuel Selvon, who was born in Trinidad but is of East Indian ancestry, moved to London in 1950 and continued his career as a journalist, poet, and short story writer. The year 1952 saw the release of his debut novel, *A Brighter Sun*.

The Lonely Londoners was the first and most influential book about African-Americans in England (and, more specifically, in London) The black Caribbean migrants who arrived in Britain after decolonization are depicted in great detail and realism in the novel *Lonely Londoners*. (Dutta, 2015, pp.123-143)

Although Samuel Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners*(1956)centers on the experiences of colonial migrants in London, a relatively small area, it is inextricably linked to the greater issues of post-war reconstruction and, not least of all, the decline of the British Empire. It focuses on at the West Indians who came to Britain in the 1950s in pursuit of a better life. Selvon also highlights the continued control white British citizens have over the formerly colonized West Indian community, especially through racially motivated attacks. For decades, conquerors had convinced people of the glory of returning to their homeland. They came to Britain full of optimism and anticipation, hoping to escape colonial oppression in favor of a new life in the city. Though that did not end up being the case for the migrants.

According to Nick Bentley, the text's rejection of Standard English exemplifies a rejection of the assumed superiority of white British cultural practices, and this is what the text is meant to convey to a white British reader. Alternatively, the use of dialect serves as ,“an empowering strategy by establishing a specific subcultural identity, and by...subverting the colonial language.” (Bentley pp.76-77) The themes of home, nostalgia, ambivalence, homelessness, and hybridity are all depicted by Selvon, and all are central postcolonial concepts that influence and construct identity. The characters in *The Lonely Londoners* are immigrants, and the author draws on personal experience to show the reader the many faces of isolation that people from other countries face. In the 1950s, a group of West Indian migrants settle in London, where they experience a number of internal conflicts that Selvon explores. Tensions arise within the community as a result of members' conflicting desires to assimilate into contemporary London culture and maintain ties to their indigenous heritage. The more they try to blend in with modern London's diverse culture, the more they're met with hostility. Peter Childs and Patrick Williams in *An introduction to post-colonial theory* , assert that: “the search for identity lies between colonized and colonizer. It is an ambivalent identification, containing both fear and desire.” (Childs and Williams, p. 125)

Moses, the protagonist of the novel, travels to London on the Empire Windrush. The character of Moses is established early on in the book. He's been based out of London for the past decade, and he's been instrumental in assisting West Indian immigrants with everything from housing to employment. He does it out of the goodness of his heart, but it can be trying when the newcomers cause problems or when he has to wait for the ship in London's "grim winter," which is foreign to his West Indian heritage. Moses helps the new comers: “But all the same he went out with them, because he used to remember how desperate he was when he was in London for the first time and didn't know anybody or anything.” (Selvon, p.25) People from all over the Caribbean, including Trinidad, Grenada, Barbados, Jamaica, and Antigua, are among the newcomers Moses meets in the harbor and offers advice to. The novel's success lies in its depiction of its characters, who hail from a variety of nations and share commonalities with one another despite their varied upbringings.

When Galahad senses a mother's unease at his attempts to communicate with her child belies her lack of concern for the situation. She acts as if she doesn't care, perhaps because they are surrounded by white people. Galahad looks at his body and realizes it is his colour that is causing the problem: "Colour, is you that causing all this, you know. . . I ain't do anything to infuriate the people and them, is you! . . . Is not we that the people don't like, is the colour Black." (pp.88-9)

The critic Frantz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Masks* argues:

Blackness, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths, blacken someone's reputation; and, on the other side, the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical, heavenly light. A magnificent blond child—how much peace there is in that phrase, how much joy, and above all how much hope! There is no comparison with a magnificent black child. (Fanon, p.189).

Black people experience unexpected levels of hostility from whites. They complain about the difficulty of getting job and food and revel in the joys of "coasting lime," but they have no plans to leave. Fanon adds: "In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness." (p. 110) Although some, like Moses, have lived in England for decades, members of the Windrush Generation are still stereotyped as being foreign to the country's culture or as being of the same race as Galahad. Moses's identity develops not only as a result of his exposure to and influence from native British people, but also as a result of his ongoing communications with his fellow Trinidadians living in Britain and, via letter and word of mouth, from contacts back in Trinidad.

Moses echoes the phrase "streets paved with gold" when he is warning Galahad about what to expect from the white British public in his hunt for a job. He notes: "To them you will be just another one of them black Jamaicans who coming to London thinking that the streets paved with gold." (Selvon, p. 41). The government uses a filing system that automatically assigns Black migrants to certain jobs. Moses tells Galahad that all Black emigrants will have a certain symbol in their files:

"J—A, Col." He defines this symbol in greater detail. "That mean you from Jamaica and you black." (Selvon, p.46)

Black West Indians are relegated to low-wage, low-skilled manual labor jobs that are reminiscent of those they would have held during Britain's imperial heydays. When Moses vents his frustration at Cap about the lack of job opportunities for West Indian migrants, he defines further what kinds of jobs those migrants might be considered acceptable for. He says: "They send you for storekeeper work and they want to put you in that yard to lift heavy iron. They think that is all we good for, and this time they keeping all the soft clerical jobs for them white fellars" (Selvon, p.52)

Moses describes London as "a miserable lonely city." (Selvon ,p.130) This quotation shows how difficult it is for migrants to integrate with the host community. It alludes to Grace's earlier description of exile as a state characterized by "alienation, fragmentation, and loneliness." Furthermore, Moses concludes: "Nobody in London does really accept you. They tolerate you." (p.126)

With each new person he helps establish roots in the area, Moses cements his status as a long-term resident. He is well-versed in the intricacies of many different communities and advises his clients on how to act in order to make friends and find work. This adds to his sense of belonging in London. He appears to have assimilated enough British customs to get by in London. Moses' statements, however, are contradictory. On the one hand, out of a sense of hegemonic duty, he assists newly arrived migrants in settling in London..

The only thing that can keep sadness and isolation at bay is the shared experience of listening to stories; when "[n]early every Sunday morning, like if they are going to church, the boys liming in Moses room, coming together for a oldtalk." (p. 138) The novel's protagonist and other characters endure a wide range of hardships, including joblessness, illness, cold, racial prejudice, environmental pollution in their neighborhood, lack of shelter, food, and companionship, and isolation. Daphne Grace states: "The tragedy is exacerbated when the new location of exile is also found to be inadequate and cannot fulfil the dreams it promised. Exile may mean freedom, but at the cost of a life of perpetual alienation, fragmentation and loneliness." (178)

Moses concludes by musing on the tragedy and sorrow and epic scope of black existence in the metropolis, all of which he may one day write about:

Daniel was telling him how over in France all kinds of fellows writing books what turning out to be best-sellers. Taxi-driver, porter, road-sweeper – it didn't matter. One day you sweating in the factory and the next day all the newspapers have your name and photo, saying how you are a new literary giant. He watch a tugboat on the Thames, wondering if he could ever write a book like that, what everybody would buy. It was a summer night: laughter fell softly: it was the sort of a night that if you wasn't making love to a woman you feel you was the only person in the world like that. (Selvon, p. 141)

Racism is reacted to differently in the novel. Fanon believed that these two worlds of colonialism created a Manichaeian (light-dark, good-evil) attitude between natives and foreigners in their region. (Bulhan, 1985). Harris and others use proper English and host "distinguished gentlemen" events to rise in society, while Moses and Galahad accept the world as it is. Another character, Daniel, wants to impress by taking white women to cultural events and nice restaurants: "I want them to feel good that we colored fellows could take them to these places," Daniel say, 'and we could appreciate even if they can't.'" (Selvon, p.59) Despite the migrants' ability to mix with white women and the urban environment of their former colonizers, London is not a completely free sexual space for them. These minority groups may experience a process of reverse colonization that brings them closer to mainstream society, but racist stereotypes of the "native American" male keep them from assuming leadership roles in the dating world. White women who have sex with them do not see them as fully realized human beings, but rather as exotic others who can fulfill only a certain kind of crude fantasy. Black men are oversexualized and handled as savages in the London portrayed by Selvon, where such racist stereotypes as these limit their freedom of expression. In a separate scene, Selvon shows how this prejudice manifests itself when an unidentified Jamaican man brings a white woman home with him: "She only interested in one thing and in the heat of emotion she call the Jamaican a black bastard." (Selvon p. 109)

London segregation is based on race, not citizenship or residency. White people are presumed to be citizens. Even after a decade, "white citizens" may not accept a "black citizen" living in the capital. even though some characters are accepting of their lot in life, others among the immigrant population are not. Even more enraged by what he saw in Loon, Big City now hopes to emulate the behavior of his fellow Londoners should he ever become wealthy: "...one day I will win that £75.000 and then you know what? [...] I would... buy out a whole street of house, and give it to the boys and say....No Rooms For Whites” (Selvon ,p. 97)

The city of London is portrayed as being split in two throughout the novel, with the immigrants destined to suffer the worst effects of this social and physical division. “The people who living in London don’t really know how behind them railway station does be so desolate and discouraging. It like another world” (Selvon,p. 52). Characters are constantly misunderstood and misrepresented by the British throughout the novel, making it seem as though they will always long for home. “So don’t expect that they will treat you like anybody special –to them you will be just another one of them black Jamaicans who coming to London thinking that the streets paved with gold” (Selvon, p.41)

There was a lot of racism because of the country's cultural diversity, making it hard for these black immigrants to not only find work but also to have adequate living conditions. When two or more cultures compete for dominance in a given field, the term "dominant culture" is used to describe the culture that is generally seen as superior. (Ungar, 2015, pp. 37-48) As a defining characteristic of the post-colonial era, when the entire black community in London was beset by a host of issues, the novelist focused particularly on this theme. (Kapur, 2017, pp. 61-112).

While dealing with homesickness and cultural differences can be challenging, Bhabha argues that it is essential for the migrant to form a hybrid identity. He defines hybrid identity as the process whereby a person's cultural background and their new country's cultural background interact. He describes it as an approach to remaking oneself in order to better integrate into a new setting.(p.33)

Conclusion

Fanon compares Manichaeism to colonialism. Colonization, in his view, creates a "Manichaean World" in which "good" colonizers and "evil" colonized people coexist. There is a widespread belief in colonial societies that all people of African descent are inherently evil, and this contributes significantly to the pervasive racism in those societies.

Throughout Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, the characters have been damaged by immigration and racism. A fresh and honest perspective on a subject usually associated with negative connotations was achieved by rethinking and reformulating the concept of immigration from the perspective of the black working-class community.

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